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Publication date:
1997

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):
Lee, S-H. (1997). *The Rise of Environmentalism in South Korea*. Institut for Historie, Internationale Studier og Samfundsforhold, Aalborg Universitet.

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ISSN 0904-8154

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DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH SERIES
RESEARCH CENTER ON DEVELOPMENT
AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS (DIR)

TEL. +45 96 35 80 80
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WORKING PAPER NO. 58

MAY, 1997

The Rise of Environmentalism in South Korea

Su-Hoon Lee*

"Dark smoke arising from factories are symbols of our nation's growth and prosperity."-----Park Chung Hee, Ulsan, 1962.

"Pollution is phenomena that appear when the contradictions of capitalism with the sole objective of pursuing profits reach their extreme ----- Korea Pollution Research Institute, 1982.

"...to realize the importance of the ecosystem, to respect life, to protect the environmental right of each individual..." ----- Korea Federation for Environmental Movement, 1993

1. Environmentalism: Creation of the "Korean Miracle"

Since the early 1960's, South Korea has undergone one of the most dramatic capitalist processes of growth with historically unprecedented speed--its average annual GNP growth rate being approximately 10 percent. Many Western scholars--particularly Americans--have described the Korean economic growth as a "miracle," suggesting that the Korean model should be adopted by other less developed Third World economies.

However, the much lauded high-speed industrialization of South Korea has brought about some devastating consequences as well. One such negative consequence is the irrevocable damage to the environment, which we may call an "environmental crisis." People often refuse to recognize the ugly and dirty side of high speed industrialization. Korean government technocrats assume, perhaps with the tacid consent of the populace, that some environmental damage is an unavoidable by-product of rapid economic growth. The populace has now come to realize the severity of environmental problems and the high price that it has to pay for what it has done to nature and to the environment. Since the late 1980s, the Korean people began to question the growth-oriented, achievement-oriented, target-oriented model of development that the Korean government has pursued. They not only questioned, but began to take concrete actions to stop further damage to the environment and to reverse the ever-increasing pollution. They did so in

* Earlier versions of this paper were presented to two workshops on "Asia's Environmental Movements in Comparative Perspective", the first at the East-West Center, University of Hawaii (November 29 - December 1, 1995) and the second at The University of Hong Kong (February 17-20, 1997). The author is indebted to colleagues for their constructive comments, in particular, Alvin Y. So, Yok-shiu Lee, Michael Hsiao, On-Kwok Lai, and Andy Szasz.

organized ways, and this signalled the emergence of the environmental movements in South Korea.

In a sense, Korea's environmental movements were created by the "Korean miracle", i.e., the high-speed industrialization which South Korea has pursued and achieved during the past 30 years or so. The distinctive pattern of national development, which was based on the rapid growth of export industries, inevitably paid less attention to the natural environment. The outcome was the massive and widespread destruction of nature and the environment. To the degree that speed in the Korean growth model was critical, the speed of environmental destruction was equally devastating. The speed of growth was the underlying force and reveals three defining characteristics of environmental degradation in Korea: 1) it is nation-wide every single individual is affected to a greater or lesser degree; 2) pollution is unfolding rapidly; 3) the pollution is of a highly malign nature (Korea Pollution Research Institute, 1986: 36-39).

Needless to say, damage to the environment is hazardous to human health and the destruction of the ecosystem will have long-term negative effects on the quality of human life. It goes without saying that the ultimate goal of economic development is to improve the living conditions of the populace concerned. In this regard, the high speed industrialization of South Korea over the past 30 years has been very costly in view of the enormity of the ecological damage in spite of its "remarkable" performance. Today the "environmental crisis" that South Korea faces is widely discerned by the public and admitted by the government.

Environmental movements in South Korea have emerged as a result of the high-speed export-oriented industrialization strategy which created the "environmental crisis". They have emerged as one way to respond to this grave challenge impinged upon the Korean public.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the South Korean environmental movements that have emerged in the 1980s. In doing so, it will address some key issues relevant to environmental movements. It will include the following: a review of the literature on environmental movements; an abbreviated history of Korea's environmental movements in the 1980s and 1990s with a focus on anti-pollution and anti-nuclear movements; the relationship between democratization and environmental movements', and an exploration of the strategies and impact of environmental movements of Korea. In this paper, I will not cover all the types of environmental movements which flourish in South Korea today. Instead, I will examine some of these issues by focusing on the largest, the most active, and the most representative organization for efficacy of discussion.

I put forth no theoretical hypothesis because the intent of this paper is not the testing of hypotheses. We find very little theorizing about environmental movements in Korea, perhaps because environmental movements themselves are a relatively recent phenomena. We first need a solid depiction of Korean environmental movements before we move on to theory-building.

There is no noteworthy methodology. In terms of data, I primarily relied upon materials (pamphlets, leaflets, newsletters, magazines, and other materials) published by various environmental organizations of Korea. I have also used interviews with environmental activists as a primary source.

2. Literature Review

Research on environmental movements is a relatively recent development in the Korean social science community. However, the topic is drawing a great deal of attention at least among sociologists. Consequently, the literature in the 1990s is accumulating rather rapidly.

The existing literature may be placed into two categories. The first category concerns the environmental movements in general, i.e., their history and major characteristics (in particular, are they anti-systemic or "new social movements"?). The second category includes specific cases of environmental movements waged by local residents.

Lee and Smith (1991) sketched the history of the Korean environmental movements of the 1980s from the viewpoint of the anti-systemic movement. In doing so, they highlighted issues, tasks, and prospects. Smith (1994) paid attention to an anti-systemic role in the contemporary world-economy played by environmentalists who critically examine the basic assumptions of capitalist growth and development and organize and act on that basis). Kim (1991) classified Korean environmental movements into two categories, i.e., progressive movements and conservative movements depending upon their perspectives on environmental problems and the ways in which they tried to tackle those problems. After an analysis of Korean environmental movements, Choi characterized the environmental movements as anti-systemic, in the sense that they are the creation of the Korean capitalist development (Choi, 1993). In his earlier article, Choi (1992) attempted to systematically categorize environmental movements in Korea. He looked at whether movements were social or ecological, and local or non-local in terms of the scope of their activities. He defined four categories: local residents' movements, anti-pollution movements, livelihood community movements, and environmental protection movements.

In contrast, S.J. Lee (1992) and Ku (1994)--whose analysis of Korean environmental movements is by far the most extensive--tend to characterize them as similar to the "new social movements" of the West. According to their understanding, Korean environmental movements show ecological concerns, new orientations other than economic interests, and new methods, which in sum are very similar to the "new social movements". Ku emphasized differences in ways of resource mobilization between Korean movements and the new social movements.

D.Y. Lee (1992) studied the anti-nuclear movements with a focus on the causal relationship between the interests or goals of participants and the outcome or achievements. He

analyzed anti-nuclear power plant construction movements as well as movements against the construction of sites for nuclear waste disposal. He underscored the "construction of meaning" in the process of movement. In his analysis of the local residents' movements of rural areas in Chonnam Province, Chung (1991) included the case of an anti-nuclear plant movement in Youngkwang County. His study provides us with an important account of the organization, leadership, resource mobilization, and support groups, involved in grass-root movements. Park's (1995) study of similar topics pays attention to factors which affect the degree of participation in movements by local residents. He found localism, social networking, the types of movement organization, and ties between local residents and Seoul-based central organizations to be the key variables which affect participation and the ultimate outcome. Both Lee and Park use their cases of anti-nuclear struggles within the larger framework of social movements. To them, anti-nuclear movements are one type of collective action.

Cho (1995) analyzes one environmental organization, the "Green Scout", as a part of social movements in general. His focus is upon the changing sociopolitical contexts in which different types of social movements have emerged, particularly since the late 1980s.

There are a number of master's theses written on the topic. They include issues such as the orientations of Korean environmental movements, movements against waste disposal sites, pollution-related illnesses, and so forth. I do not refer to them in this paper, and have also excluded writings which appeared in magazines or other mass media.

3. Emergence of Environmental Movements in the 1980s¹

Environmental groups have existed in Korea since the 1970s. For the most part, however, these groups were small and connected with churches or based in universities. The primary activities of these small isolated groups were to heighten the environmental consciousness of the citizenry.

The very first recognized environmental group came into being in 1980, and was called the "Study Group on Pollution (SGP)." Actually, this group existed on the Seoul National University campus since the 1970s. A small non-public organization with comparatively little activity, it signalled the blossoming of organized environmental movements in the 1980s (D.Y. Lee, 1990). The key members of this group were primarily concerned with scientific and technological advances/improvements. They were concerned with such issues as the social meaning of science and technology, the role of scientists and engineers, and the need to recast the existing image of scientists. Students involved in this group were mostly science or engineering majors rather than social sciences or humanities majors. It should be noted that these latter groups have usually been more active forces in student movements, compared to science and engineering majors.

Immediately after its formation, the SGP experienced a split, between more radical segments and more moderate ones in terms of ideological spectrum and movement strategy. The first emphasized the relative importance of concrete actions and the second focused on expertise (interview with Byung-Ok Ahn, March 1991).

We can discuss the environmental movements of the 1980s by dividing them into two large currents: anti-pollution movements and anti-nuclear movements.

1) Anti-Pollution Movements

In 1982, through the initiative of church leaders the "Korea Pollution Research Institute" (KPRI) was founded. The KPRI was the first organized environmental movement group, in the sense that it had staff, office space, and other resources required to operate an organization. One of the founding members of KPRI who was also its Associate Director of Research, Choi Yul, is now Korea's most active and perhaps most widely recognized environmental movement leader. Choi is currently the Secretary-General of the Korea Federation for Environmental Movement (KFEM)--the largest and most active environmental organization in Korea today.

Under the frozen political circumstances of the notorious Chun Doo Whan regime, the KPRI carried out significant, albeit limited, activities. The Church provided it with a protective shield. By supporting the activities of small environmental groups, the KPRI provided a link among those isolated environmental groups. At the same time, it did fieldwork in polluted areas and helped local residents promote their own programs to reduce damage from pollution. It also held pollution-related counselling and open lectures to promote awareness among the populace.

The successful fieldwork at the Onsan Industrial Complex (located on the southeastern coast near Ulsan)--the site of non-iron heavy metal industries--may be singled out among the numerous achievements of the KPRI. In 1985, the KPRI issued a series of reports, the major finding of which was the epidemiology of the so-called "Onsan illness" that struck about five hundred Onsan residents as of 1985 (KPRI, 1986: 86-119). The number has increased each year, and now numbers more than one thousand. The "Onsan illness" was confirmed by a Japanese scientist who identified it as a Korean version of Japan's well-known "Itai-itai illness." The cause of "Onsan illness" was the contamination of the majority of Onsan residents with heavy metal elements such as cadmium.

The KPRI's reports were well covered by the press.² Subsequently the organization succeeded in publicizing not only the Onsan incident but the potential for pollution-related illnesses everywhere. This was the hottest social issue in 1985 and became known overseas as well. Mounting public pressure forced the Agency of Environment to conduct an epidemiological survey of the alleged sufferers of the "Onsan illness." After a hurried survey--the survey took only one week (KPRI, 1986: 108-109)--the government publicly declared that the density level of

heavy metal in blood and urine among Onsan residents was "normal." Ironically, the government eventually moved the residents of Onsan, yielding to the struggles of residents and environmental activists. About forty thousand residents have been resettled, portraying an "exodus from pollution." (Cho, 1990: 209).

In 1984, various small groups including campus circles, groups of white collar workers, etc., the most notable of which was the SGP, formed the "Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Council" (KAPMC) in the hope that the movement would be more systematic if some type of link were to be established. However, this attempt failed because the Council could not operate without the strong support of each member group. Here the earlier "hidden" split in the SGP between the more radical subgroup and the more moderate subgroup expressed itself in concrete form. The former became the driving force in forming the "Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Youth Council" (KAPMYC) in 1987. The latter, with an emphasis on expertise, was absorbed into the "Korea Environment and Pollution Studies Association" (KEPSA) which was founded in 1989. The primary concerns of the members in this subgroup were mainly theoretical issues. Some have left the movement to find regular jobs, but continue to express their earlier concerns in their individual occupational fields such as journalism, academia, households, and so forth.

In 1986, amidst intensifying popular pressure for democratization, the formation of the "Korea Anti-Pollution Civilian Movement Council" (KAPCMC) was a significant milestone. In the following year, the above-mentioned KAPMYC was formed. It may be repeated that this latter organization was a transformation of the earlier KAPMC, with a more open and public posture. The significance of these organizations was that they broadened the support base of Korea's environmental movements during its nascent stage.

The year 1988 is also recorded as a critical point in the history of Korea's environmental movements. For in that year the "Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Association" (KAPMA) was formed with the merging of the earlier KAPCMC and KAPMYC. At that time the KAPMA represented the mass-based Korean environmental movement, with the largest organization and most diverse anti-pollution and anti-nuclear activities. With a membership of over 1,300 as of early 1991, it published and distributed a monthly newsletter called, "Survival and Peace." In February 1991, it held its fourth General Assembly through which it reconstituted its organs to accommodate young professionals such as professors, medical doctors, lawyers, and journalists.

In the summer of 1989, two important changes took place: the KPRI changed into the Korea Anti-Nuclear and Anti-Pollution Peace Movement Research Institute, and the more moderate subgroup of the SGP was absorbed into the KEPSA. The former organization was, however, still limited in the sense that its key members were church leaders and because it remained based in churches. This fact negatively squares with the mass-based KAPMA. The protective shields that the Church provided against the authoritarian government were

advantageous to its activities, although it was probably because of this that it lacked issues and strategies that appealed to the masses.

Even though all these environmental organizations that were formed in the 1980s were nominally nation-wide organizations, in reality they were all Seoul based and their activities were limited in that regard. The Korean environmental movement in the 1980s also saw the activation of environmental movements in local areas, particularly in the late 1980s. I will briefly list some of more active local environmental organizations. It should be made clear that these local organizations are by no means less important than those in Seoul and that their activities carry no less weight.

The origins of the more organized environmental movements of the 1980s can be found in the anti-pollution struggles waged by local residents who have been direct victims of Korea's environmental destruction (KPRI, 1986: 263). Therefore, we must not underestimate various resident-level (primarily farmers and fishermen) movements taking place in major industrial complexes such as Ulsan, Pusan, and Yeosu. Despite the fact that those movements took place in isolation and with the economic objective of obtaining the right to survive, in many instances they were the roots of more organized local anti-pollution movement associations. It may also be noted that these resident-level movements in the 1970s took place in spite of open and explicit government suppression. Questioning the government's determined drive to "develop" or taking issue with the by-products of its drive was taboo and regarded as "undesirable", and therefore became the target of governmental oppression.

In 1987, in the southwestern coastal area, the "Mokpo Green Movement Council" was formed under the leadership of a local medical doctor. This group evolved from an earlier, loosely organized nature preservation group, called "The Association to Preserve Youngsan Lake." This association is famous among Korean environmentalists because of its successful campaign in 1983 to stop the government from approving the construction of a Jinro Alcohol Plant--the maker of the Jinro *Soju* (Korean whisky)--near Youngsan Lake, a reservoir for tap water for the city of Mokpo.

In 1989, a number of important local organizations were founded: the "Pusan Anti-Pollution Civilian Movement Council", the "Kwangju Environment and Pollution Movement Association", the "Mokpo Youth Association Against Pollution and Nuclear Plants," and, in an area near Mokpo, the "Youngkwang Anti-Nuclear Plants Movement Association" was also established. It should be recalled that in Youngkwang, two nuclear plants (Korea Nuclear No. 7 and No. 8) were in operation and contracts to construct two more plants (Korea Nuclear No. 11 and No. 12) were also concluded. As of the end of 1996, construction of the latter two was completed. A total of four plants are now in operation in Youngkwang, and two more are under construction. Also in 1989, the "Uljin Anti-Nuclear Plants Movement Youth Association" was

formed. In Uljin, a county on the southeast coast not far away from the city of Ulsan, the construction of two plants (Korea Nuclear No. 9 and No. 10) was completed at the end of 1988.

In the same year, the "Ulsan Anti-Pollution Movement Association" was formed. As is well known, Ulsan is an industrial city which was designated by the government as the site to accommodate petrochemical industries in the 1960s and 1970s and later for Hyundai's shipyard and automobile assembly lines.

These local environmental movement organizations were mostly independent and isolated, although some degree of linkage and support from Seoul-based organizations did exist. Apparently, a close personal relationship between local movement leaders and Seoul activists was maintained.

In the 1980s, even the terminology was distinct. Movement groups used the term, "anti-pollution" rather than environmental protection. Their slogans and goals were the elimination of "pollution" or "anti-pollution", rather than the protection of the environment or the control of environmental crisis. They resisted, opposed, and struggled. They also drew a clear line between polluters and victims, and considered the capitalist system to be the primary cause of pollution.

2) *Anti-nuclear Movements*

South Korean anti-nuclear movements constitute one of main currents of Korean environmental movements. This has more or less been the case from the very beginning of Korea's environmental movements.

If one analyzes the industrialization processes of South Korea, it is clear that nuclear issues are deeply embedded in larger environmental issues. To sustain high-speed, export-oriented industrial growth, electricity has been at the center of Korea's economic development. The Korean government opted for the nuclear path to supply electric power. Once the South Korean government chose this path, the structural interests of international nuclear industries, primarily the U.S., technocratic elites of the government, and local conglomerates all converged to promote the nuclear power industry in South Korea. The declining U.S. nuclear industry saw a business opportunity in South Korea, whose leader at the time, President Park Chung Hee, was entertaining ambitions of nuclear weapons development.

After some 30 years of a vigorous nuclear energy development program³ pursued by the South Korean government, eleven commercial nuclear power plants⁴ are in operation as of 1996, with five under various stages of construction. Altogether fifty-five more nuclear plants are planned to be built by the year 2031. If one is for nuclear energy, South Korea today should be regarded as a quite impressive achiever.

But South Korea today is a nation which suffers a deep nuclear crisis. Out of the eleven plants already in operation, reports of nuclear accidents of varying degrees are quite frequent.⁵

All the ongoing nuclear power plant construction sites meet vehement resistance by local residents. The country also faces a nuclear waste storage crisis. Each on-site temporary spent fuel repository is reaching capacity. The country desperately needs a long-term site for storing nuclear wastes, but the omnipresent NIMBY--Not In My Backyard--phenomenon is at work in South Korea too.

Obviously, the nation is torn by nuclear conflicts. The basic position of the government remains unchanged. The general public mistrusts their government when it comes to nuclear issues. Construction projects worth billions of dollars are pending without any progress in either direction. Nuclear wastes are piling up, but **no** permanent site(s) for storage are foreseen. Not only does a lack of consensus between the government and the general public exist but the gap continues to widen.

South Korea has become a country with one of the highest levels of nuclear dependence in the world. In the 1980s, South Korea relied on nuclear power to supply more than 50% of its electricity (Bello and Rosenfeld, 1990: 103; Hart-Landsberg, 1993: 268). At present, the ratio stands at more than one-third. Electric power is one of the key elements in South Korea's continuing export growth. Since high-speed economic growth has been the single most important national goal, no one has dared to question the government's nuclear generation policy which is crucial to its national developmental strategy.⁶

However, from the mid-1980s, the populace began to show serious concern over their government's firm and ever ambitious nuclear power generation program. This concern was perhaps a result of the numerous nuclear plant accidents coupled with the political liberalization at the time. The nuclear issue, which was taboo under the authoritarian regimes and up to the mid-1980s, emerged in the public debate arena during the late 1980s. The debate questioned the efficiency of nuclear power and more importantly the safety of nuclear plants. This question, which was then not widely shared by the public, was discounted by the government as groundless allegations. As the public debate heated, the propaganda waged by the government strengthened. It commonly cited successful nuclear programs in select Western countries, while ignoring the world-wide trend toward the ultimate termination of nuclear energy programs.

South Korea as a nation today faces a grave dilemma. On one hand, giving up the nuclear development program is too costly from a short-term point of view. While on the other hand, the negative perception of nuclear energy shared by the general public is too high to be silenced. As time passes, negative perceptions are most likely to increase, despite the continued costly efforts made by the government. This dilemma is one of the origins of Korea's anti-nuclear movements.

The history of South Korean anti-nuclear movements begins from the year 1987. In that year, local residents living in the County of Youngkwang--the site of Korea Nuclear No. 7, No. 8 (these two were already in operation), No. 11, and No. 12 (these two were under construction

then) launched a campaign calling for compensation for losses to fisheries. In 1988, the National Assembly took on the issue of the pending construction of Korea Nuclear No. 11 and No. 12 in Youngkwang. A heated debate between the government and anti-nuclear forces ensued both inside and outside the National Assembly. The major issue at stake was safety, perhaps reflecting the impact of the Chernobyl incident. Obviously, environmental movement leaders were involved in the debate. Moreover, they launched a major campaign against the construction of the two plants. They organized and executed mass rallies, and received signatures from citizens. They also published a newsletter, called "Anti-Nuclear Plants". The objective of this campaign was to create a national consensus against nuclear power plants and to consolidate existing resident-level movements.

In the spring of 1989, twenty-one environmental and other (pharmacists; medical doctors, etc.) social movement organizations formed the "National Headquarters for the Nuclear Power Eradication Movement" (Cho, 1990: 190). This was originally an ad hoc organization drawing together the scattered nascent anti-nuclear movements that previously existed. Resident-level anti-nuclear power plant movements provided a major impetus for the formation of the National Headquarters. The National Headquarters was established as part of this campaign in order to carry it out in a more organized and more effective manner. Even though the Korean government eventually proceeded to complete Korea Nuclear No. 11 and No. 12, this campaign, conducted under the guidance of the Headquarters, became a critical turning point in the history of Korea's anti-nuclear movements in the sense that it succeeded in raising public awareness to a significant extent.

One must not overlook the issue of nuclear weapons on the agenda of the Headquarters and its importance within the South Korean anti-nuclear movement. It was "a public secret" that a sizeable number of nuclear warheads were placed in South Korea. North Korea has consistently raised this issue against Seoul and Washington.

In the late 1980s, nuclear weapons became the object of public debate. Therefore, when we refer to "anti-nuclear movements in South Korea", they clearly include the issue of nuclear weapons in addition to nuclear plants. But, due in part to the anti-nuclear movements and due in larger part to the progress made between the two Koreas, South Korea became "non-nuclearized" as of December 1991, when the historic "Non-nuclearization Declaration" was officially announced by Seoul and Pyongyang that both sides would not store or process nuclear weapons, nor the means to produce them. It also stated that the two parties' commitment to establishing an inspectorate to verify the absence of such weapons and facilities by mutual observation (Cotton, 1993: 291-292).⁷ Nuclear warheads which were known to be scattered around South Korea were retrieved. As a result of this, nuclear weapons per se are not on the agenda of Korean anti-nuclear

movements today. However, this should not imply that Koreans close their eyes toward global nuclear weaponry.

In many ways, 1989 can be recorded as the turning point not only in terms of the public debate over nuclear energy issues but also for issues such as nuclear weapons. (Cho, 1990: 183). Existing resident-level movements focused on the issue of illegal nuclear waste disposal. They waged protests and demonstrations to invoke awareness among the public of the potential damage nuclear plants may cause. In addition, there was the external shock of the disastrous Chernobyl incident in 1986.

Among the populace, the dangers of nuclear plants were no longer regarded a remote issue concerning others. With nine nuclear plants in operation as of 1988, a similar mishap could occur at any time on the Korean peninsula--a country smaller than the State of Ohio. In addition to the pending construction of Korea Nuclear No. 11 and No. 12, the government announced very disturbing nuclear energy plans: 1) by the year 2001, five more nuclear plants are to be built and 2) by the year 2031, 55 additional nuclear plants will be constructed (Cho, 1990: 184).

While preventing the construction of additional nuclear plants is a major goal of Korean anti-nuclear movements, another major issue is the location of a permanent site for nuclear wastes. Indeed, in the 1990s the Korean anti-nuclear movements gained crucial strength from their struggle against the government's plan or proposal for a permanent and centralized nuclear waste repository site.

Like other countries with nuclear power plants, Korea has had the problem of storing or depositing spent nuclear fuel. So far, spent fuel has been stored in pools at each reactor site. However, these temporary sites are known to have reached their limits during the mid-1990s although there are variations across different reactor sites. Yet the South Korean government has had difficulty in locating a long-term waste storage site for spent fuel and other waste nuclear materials.⁸

The country has experienced a nearly 10 year-long battle between the government and the opposition over the issue of the long-term storage of nuclear wastes. In 1988, the government proposed to build a long-term storage site on South Korea's southeast coast. Three sites are selected for consideration: Uljin, Youngil, and Youngduk (counties or towns not distant from one another, and very near to several existing nuclear plants). However, when the sites were announced, anti-nuclear activists and local residents organized protests and blockaded major highways with tractors. After months of confrontational protests, the government had to cancel its plan. This stand-off between the government and the opposition was not nationally publicized at the time. This was not an isolated episode. From then on, the struggle has become a nationwide issue, making control by the government much more difficult and reducing its bargaining power.

Another episode followed less than two years later. In 1990, anti-nuclear activists became aware that the government had secretly identified Anmyondo (a remote island off the west coast of the peninsula in Chungnam Province) as a proposed site for a permanent nuclear waste repository. The islanders, assisted by a coalition of environmental associations, launched protests against the yet unannounced project. What made the islanders really angry was the deceiving announcement by the government that the island was chosen as a research complex site, not a nuclear waste disposal site. The response of residents across the entire island was explosive when they found out the truth. Police and public buildings were attacked and several were set on fire. Shops were looted. Many people were injured. Parents refused to send children to school, and children joined the riots. As the uprising showed no sign of subduing, the Minister of Science and Technology (Dr. Chung Kun Mo, a prominent scientist) appeared on national television evening news to announce his resignation.

The government was forced to withdraw its plan and look for another site. The Anmyondo uprising and its success are recorded as "a great victory" in the history of the Korean anti-nuclear movement.

In 1994, the cycle repeated itself once again when the Korean government announced an alternative site to be the town of Uljin (a small town on the Southeast coast of Kyungbuk Province, already the site of two commercial nuclear plants). Violent protests and demonstrations followed, roads were blockaded with burning tires and fire bombs were thrown. A sizeable police force had to be called in to quell the tensions. Once again, the Ministry of Science and Technology was forced to withdraw its plan.

Immediately after the episode, the government hurriedly announced its proposal to designate Kulopdo (a tiny island about fifty miles off the west coast, near the famous port city of Inchon) an alternative storage site. The island had only ten residents, who according to the government agreed to accept compensation for their properties. But by now the public awareness was high as a consequence of previous episodes. Environmentalists objected to the government's selection. This time, they raised questions about its suitability on the grounds that the island could be vulnerable in terms of geological dynamics. They began to organize the islanders and the people of neighboring Dukjok island. Local residents quickly turned their backs to the government. Residents simply stated that they will never move from their "homes" no matter what monetary rewards are offered. Their homelands, where their ancestors rest and where they will rest upon death, should not be the objects of bargaining.

These episodes clearly document that the government, unlike in the past, cannot implement its policy without consent from the population which will be affected by such a policy. Therefore, the Korean government has a serious problem. It must find a place for the permanent nuclear waste repository. For the capacity at each reactor, which is temporary anyway, is reaching

its ceiling. However, no locale is willing to become the site for "dangerous" wastes. NIMBY is at work. Democracy in Korea is too new to handle the phenomenon in a mature way. The root cause of this problem can be found in the nondemocratic (often clandestine), bureaucracy-centered, and authoritarian policy-making and administration of the government's policy (*Hwankyungundong*, 1993, September issue: 44-45).

South Korean anti-nuclear movements should build solidarity between local residents and concerned citizens residing in cities, in particular cities not too distant from nuclear plants. As consumers of power, city-dwellers are also potential victims of nuclear disaster or minor radioactivity; thus public hearings, debates, and exhibits in these cities are instrumental to promote solidarity. In order to activate anti-nuclear movements in urban areas, campaigns like "Help Children of Chernobyl", "Send Gauges to Measure Radioactivity", and "Develop Alternative Energy Programs" should persist.

At the center of the Korean nuclear crisis lies the monopoly of the electric power industry (production and distribution) by the government (the Korea Electric Power Company). The industry should be liberalized. Calls for the liberalization of KEPCO's monopoly are timely because liberalization is the Korean government's policy toward state enterprises. Pluralistic power production and distribution will create market mechanisms through which progressive ideas (e.g., alternative forms of power generation) can be implemented. The revision of existing energy-related laws and measures should be instituted.

The defining character of the Korean environmental movement in the 1980s was that they were anti-pollution and anti-nuclear movements. During the first half of the 1980s, the major issue was the various types of pollution that were produced as a consequence of rapid industrialization. In the second half of the decade, more weight has been given to anti-nuclear issues, although this is not to suggest that pollution is no longer a key issue within the environmental movement.

4. Consolidation and Expansion of Environmental Movements in the 1990s

In the 1990s, environmental movements have experienced significant transformations. More than anything else, they have expanded under different structural contexts. Qualitative changes have also taken place under the altered political mapping. I will discuss these in this section.

In the early 1990s, more ecologically oriented green organizations emerged. The reconstitution or reorganization of existing environmental groups also took place. In terms of activities and membership, two organizations deserve our attention. The first is the "Korea Federation for Environmental Movement" (KFEM), which I will discuss later separately. The second is "Green Korea." "Green Korea" is the result of a merger of two existing organizations in 1993: the "Baedal Eco Club", a research group of professionals, founded in 1991; and the

"Civic Association for Recovering Green Korea," also founded in 1991. As the term, "green" in its title implies, "Green Korea" tends to be more ecologically oriented. The ecological orientation of "Green Korea" was clearly evident in the words of its Secretary-General, Jang Won: "...recycling, diversity, coexistence, network, eco-systems..."(*Hwankyungundong*, 1995, April: 47).

It must be pointed out that among the many green organizations, groups, and even a political party (the Green Party of Korea) that emerged in the late 1980s and the early 1990s, only KFEM and "Green Korea" had a membership of more than 1,000. This may indicate how nascent environmental movements in Korea were, in spite of the quantitative expansion of environmental movements during this period.

1) *Domestic Structural Contexts*

The consolidation and expansion of environmental movements began to take place in the last years of the 1980s (refer to Table 1). During this rather short period of time, the following factors were critical in consolidating and expanding environmental movements: 1) the 1987 "June uprising" and the ensuing "June 29 Declaration" (see Lee, 1993 for a detailed account); 2) a series of tap water contamination incidents in 1989 and 1990; and 3) the role of mass media. In addition to these, it goes without saying that the activities of the environmental movements in the early part of the 1980s provided a crucial impetus for later developments.

Table 1: Trend in the Organizational Expansion of Environmental Movements

Year	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Number	none	2	3	6	11	8	19	18

Source: Ku (1994, P.114)

The 1987 political *abertura* provided environmental activists with a windfall opportunity to consolidate and expand their movements. As I mentioned earlier in the paper, 1987 was a turning point in the history of Korea's political development. It signalled the democratic transition from the authoritarian regime to the civilian government. It also signalled the activation of civil society (Lee, 1993). The participation of urban white-collar groups in the "Great Uprising"--a nationwide anti-Chun regime uprising--had enormous implications on environmental movements. The implications were various in respect to their ideological leaning, the composition of their membership, and their organizational expansion. Precisely because of their critical role in the

watershed of Korea's political development, this group, the "new middle strata", began to appear as a central force in leading diverse social movements in the 1990s.

In the summer of 1989, tap water in Seoul was reported to be contaminated by heavy metals such as cadmium and mercury. Major newspapers carried this rather shocking incident. Reaction by the people was enormous. This provided a major stimulus for promoting public awareness of Korea's greatly deteriorated environment. Until then, for the majority of the public "anti-pollution" was "their" issue, not "my" problem. The contamination of the city's water supply shook the entire citizenry. Exactly one year later, in the summer of 1990, a second incident involving tap water contamination occurred. Reportly, tap water in Seoul contained the cancer-causing chemical element, THM. Once again, the incident received a great deal of media attention. People responded with anger, but more importantly they began to question the reliability of the government and to listen to what environmental activists were saying.

In the spring of 1991, about half a year after the second shock, yet another major incident occurred; this time even more disastrous. "Doosan Electronics"--a semiconductor chip manufacturing plant--dumped a large amount of phenol into the upper Nakdong River which fed the reservoir supplying tap water to the southeast region. This incident was reported in newspapers and televised nationally, invoking nation-wide anger and frustration. The "environmental crisis" was perceived to be real. Residents of the major cities (Taegu, Pusan, Masan, Changwon) located in the southeast demonstrated extreme sentiments of anger and betrayal toward the government. The Chairman of the Doosan Group announced that the Group will pay 50 billion won (about 60 million U.S. dollars) to the City of Taegu in compensation for the damages caused by the incident. He also stepped down from his position.

Ku (1994: 55-58) underscored the positive role that the mass media played from 1987 in the growth of environmental movements in his analysis of the coverage of issues related to the environment by Seoul based major daily newspapers. I basically agree with his analysis, but it would be more accurate to say that the mass media's role was more important in imbuing the public with an environmental consciousness. According to the statistics presented in Table 2, the coverage of environmental issues in newspapers increased greatly from 1987. Compared to the previous year, in 1987 alone the coverage doubled, and thereafter increased significantly.

Table 2: Newspaper Coverage of Environmental Issues

Year	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992
Number	479	406	369	299	433	873	1,313	3,250	5,331	6,464	8,884
% increase		-15%	-9%	-19%	45%	102%	50%	148%	64%	21%	37%

Source: Ku (1994, p. 56)

Equally interesting statistics which might indicate the increased concern by the **mass** media are shown in the number of editorials related to environmental issues carried in the six major daily newspapers (Chosun, Dong-Ah, Hankook, Choongang, Kyunghyang, and Seoul). According to Table 3, the number of environment related editorials increased notably from 1988 to 1989. Although there is a minor reduction in the following year, the trend appears to persist. Editorials not simply represent public opinion, but also influence it. They often place considerable pressure on the government and business, and can also provide a morale boost to environmental activists.

Table 3: Newspaper Editorials

Year	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991
Number	42	58	91	81	101

Source: Ku (1994, P. 56)

I would also like to point to the fact that environmental newspapers came into being during this period. They cover only environmental issues and problems, and are mostly published weekly with a limited size of circulation. As of August 1995, more than twenty such weekly papers were registered with the Ministry of Information (*Hwankyungundong*, 1995, October: 43). How seriously they were taken by the public or how influential they are on the government or their readers is unknown. Nevertheless, the very fact that environmental newspapers emerged reveals the blossoming of public concern and the importance of the environment in Korea.

In sum, the positive role that the mass media played during this period is undisputable. But the question is why during this period? This must be examined in the context of the political *abertura* after the 1987 "Great Uprising" and the "June 29 Declaration". The mass media was under tight control during Chun Doo Hwan's rule. Agents of the National Security Agency were resident in newspaper companies. Censorship was practiced. "Pollution," or the environment for that matter, was still perceived to be part of the opposition's discourse.

But with the changing tide of the time, the environment became a very popular issue. The words "environment" (*Hwankyung*) or "environmental protection" (*Hwankyungboho*) carry no nuance of opposition and/or militancy. Rather suddenly, it became a very neutral issue, with no ideological underpinnings. It became the subject matter of daily life, was introduced into everyday discourse and thus concerned everyone. The government began to take a pro-environmental posture. Business sensed enormous implications which might affect their profit-seeking behavior after the Rio Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). It too began, at least in gesture and in rhetoric, to be pro-environment. Mass media also reacted to these new developments by increasing their coverage of environmental issues.⁹

2) *World-Historic Context: The 1992 Rio Conference*

The 1992 UNCED held in Rio gave Korean environmental movements significant momentum. During the several months prior to the Conference, all sorts of preparatory activities took place. Seminars organized by either the government, environmental organizations, or business sector were held almost daily. The topics covered were diverse: how to deal with the Summit Meeting, the changing strategies of the business sector, and the role of NGOs in the Conference, etc. The business sector released "Businessmen's Environmental Declaration" in May, and the government announced the "Declaration for Environmental Protection" during the celebration events of Earth Day. In the past, neither the government nor the business sector showed any interest in the Earth Day Celebration events. They had to change because the world-historic context forced them to do so. With the Korean economy so deeply dependent upon the world market, they had little choice but to respond.

Through these activities, contacts between green activists, the government, and the business sector became frequent. This meant a lot because in the past environmental activists generally held a hostile posture toward both the government and the business sector. Preparatory activities created a platform on which these different actors, facing common challenges--albeit with different implications--could interact. The environmental crisis was indeed real and something to be dealt with properly, not to be avoided or ignored.

In the midst of this preparation, "the Korean Commission for the Rio Conference" was formed on the initiative of the environmental organizations. Initially, the membership of the Commission was to be limited to NGOs only. But later, representatives of the business sector joined the Commission, or more accurately the NGOs allowed them to join. This was possible in part due to the frequent contacts they had through the preparatory activities. The business sector sponsored not only some of the activities of the NGOS--including environmental organizations like KAPMA--but also covered the travel expenses of NGO representatives to Rio. This stirred in-fighting within the environmental organizations. KAPMA lost its more radical and non-

conciliatory membership due to this internal fighting. This later served as the main motor for transforming the basic characteristics of KAPMA. After the Rio Conference, KAPMA began to take a more moderate line compared to the past.

An equally important impact of the Rio Conference was the broadening of the concerns of Korea's environmental movements. Prior to their participation in the Rio Conference, they tended to place their attention on domestic environmental issues. Contacts with international green organizations or with organizations in other countries were isolated and minimal. After the Conference, however, they became more global. They came to realize the global nature of environmental problems and the importance of global solidarity in tackling environmental issues. How successful they were in promoting global activities and international solidarity is another issue which I will discuss later in the paper.

5. The Democratization Movement: The Root of Environmental Movements

Student movements in South Korea have a long and prestigious history. They have recorded remarkable achievements and have had far-reaching impacts on the life of Koreans in modern times. They have also led and dominated famous Korean democratization movements.

They overthrew the authoritarian Syngman Rhee in 1960. They were also responsible for the fatal pressure on Park Chung Hee's 18 year bureaucratic authoritarian regime which collapsed after the assassination of the dictator by one of his confidants, the KCIA chief, in 1979. When the military government led by General Chun Doo Hwan came to power, students resisted it most vehemently and consistently. And when Chun transferred power to his long-time friend, ex-general Roh Tae Woo who took off the uniform but who nonetheless took power due to his participation in the 1979 military coup, students continued to resist the pseudo-civilian government. As President Roh Tae Woo's regime underwent the trying periods of "democratization," the student movements still stood very strong. Even under the civilian government of President Kim Young Sam, student movements are highly visible, although their social impact has been comparatively reduced.

There are no apparent connections or organized ties between student movements and the environmental movement. This is not to say that students, as individuals, do not participate in environmental movements or similarly that on-campus environmental groups do not exist. In both instances, they do, and actually some do very actively (for a brief account, see *Sisa journal*, 1990, Nov. 15 issue: 62; *Hwankyungundong*, 1997, March: 80-83). One example is the "University Students Association" under the umbrella of the KFEM. This Association is by no means inactive. However, the core strands of the two movements have never worked together in a systematic or organized manner. In that sense, the relationship between the two movements is still ambiguous.

Nevertheless, an indirect linkage between student movements and the environmental movement exists in the sense that the former has produced many key environmental activists and that the organizational origins of today's diverse environmental organizations can be traced back to campuses in the 1970s. In that sense, the roots of Korean environmental movements are the democratization movements which were dominated by university students.

In the first instance, many environmental movement leaders today are former democratization movement activists. Let us take the KFEM, the largest and most active environmental movement organization in Korea, as a case in point. As I briefly mentioned above, Choi Yul, KFEM's Secretary-General, is a former democratization movement activist.¹⁰ In addition, at least half of the eight man Executive Committee of the afore-mentioned KAPMA--which, before transforming into the KFEM, used to be the highest day-to-day decision making organ of KAPMA--were active in democratization movements. Besides Choi, there were a medical doctor who also served a prison term, a theatrical director, and a medical school professor, all known to have been very active in democratization movements.

In the second instance, the discussion we presented in the previous section on scattered campus environmental groups and "circles" is quite relevant here. The transformatory history of the SGP is most notable. Student participants in the scientific technological movement played crucial roles in giving birth to environmental movement organizations. By occupying middle-level support positions, they constantly provide driving energy to all the organizations.

In the 1980s, anti-pollution movements considered themselves a part or a subsidiary of the democratization movement. They asserted that anti-pollution was only one of the many arenas to be "liberated" at the end of the military dictatorship. Anti-pollution was one of many ways in which democratization movement forces could attack the military government. Since pollution was the product of business monopolies, political oppression, and the peninsula's north-south division that were all crystallized into the military-ruled authoritarian regime, the end to this regime was the most appropriate path to stop worsening pollution. There was definitely a solid link between the solution to the ever-increasing and life-threatening levels of pollution and democratization.

In a sense, the democratization movement was not simply the root of Korea's environmental movements. Environmental movements in Korea in the 1980s were equal to democratization movements. Until 1987, environmental movements could not be properly approached outside the contours of democratization movements. During the first half of the 1980s, environmental movements--more correctly "anti-pollution" movements--were deeply influenced or perhaps dominated by the prevailing tide of democratization. They were influenced by the dominating discourse of the time.¹¹ Like other movements, anti-pollution movements in the 1980s were more or less radicalized, resistant, and hostile.

6. The Korea Federation for Environmental Movements: A Case Analysis

1) Formation of the KFEM

In 1993, the Seoul-based KAPMA and its eight local chapters formed the KFEM, a national, unified organization. By the end of 1994, its membership numbered about 13,000, and as of December 1996, it numbered approximately 25,000 (interview with Kyung Sock Lee in charge of membership management of KFEM, January 22, 1997). This increase was due to a determined drive to expand its membership. It should be pointed out that the drive was successful because the projected image of the KFEM was more moderate.

The KFEM discarded some of distinctive characteristics of the original KAPMA: hostility toward big business and the state, radicalism, and "anti-pollution." It softened up its tone and modified its strategy. Although it is difficult to say that it lost its basic focus, a notable shift took place. It began to emphasize popularity and technical expertise as critical elements for a successful movement. Grass-root participation was underscored. The catchword of the KFEM at its inception was "environment is life." This alone reveals a lot about the transformation from the KAPMA to the KFEM.

The KFEM has its headquarters in Seoul with 27 local chapters under its umbrella as of January 1997. More local chapters are expected to be founded in the future. The KFEM headquarters runs a think-tank called the "Center for Citizens' Environment." In addition, in order to provide legal advice on cases relevant to pollution, it runs the "Center for Legal Counsel." University professors and lawyers play major roles in these functions. It also runs the "Center for Information," the main purpose of which is to collect all forms of information and to disseminate them to the public. In 1996, the Center opened a World Wide Web home page (called "Korean Environmental Information") on the internet. Local chapters are already connected, and international sources of environmental information will be connected in the future. Users have easy access to all internet information--domestic and international--thanks to this service.

In a similar vein, environmental activists underscore the importance of education for future generations. The KFEM has made efforts to promote such education. They demanded that the government include subjects related to environment in the textbooks of primary and secondary schools. They have also developed their own programs such as summer camps, night lectures, and the taxi-drivers' environmental monitorship program. As environmental education is increasingly emphasized as a long-term vehicle for promoting public awareness, the "Citizens' Environment School" has become a crucial organ of the KFEM. The school offers a month-long program open to the general public. Students pay a nominal fee and as of the end of 1996 sixteen programs have been conducted. In 1995, the KFEM opened a facility for educational purposes

in Hongcheon, Kangwon Province, and is currently raising funds to construct a headquarters office building.

2) *Activities of the KFEM*

It is not easy to summarize the activities of the KFEM and its many local chapters, precisely because environmental issues can vary depending upon local communities. However, there are general areas of emphasis. These are in part manifested in its monthly newsletters and magazine titled *Hwankyungundong* (Environmental Movement). They include anti-nuclear activities--struggles against nuclear plant construction and the building of nuclear waste disposal sites. It may be recalled that the KAPMA used to put a great deal of energy into anti-nuclear activities. Its legacy continues. One example was the campaign discussed in some detail earlier concerning the successful struggle waged by local residents and the KFEM against the government's plan to designate Anmyondo¹² and Gulupdo as the site for a permanent nuclear waste disposal.

Conventional issues of environmental degradation, including water and air pollution are also major topics still to be fought for. In fact, in 1994 the KFEM centered on "water" as the focus of its activities with the catchword "water is life." Major rivers which supplied reservoirs for tap water were closely monitored. The Ministry of Environment was pressed for the tighter regulation of rivers and for the improved management of tap water processing plants. In spite of these efforts, the quality of tap water has not improved, indicating that rivers are not adequately controlled or managed. For instance, in 1996 a bitter and angry struggle was waged by the residents of Pusan and the Province of Kyungnam, who rely upon the "Nakdong River" for their tap water (recall this river is used as the reservoir for tap water in the Southeast region). They were opposed to the plan to designate Wicheon--situated alongside the river, and located on the outskirts of the city of Taegu--as the site for a new industrial complex. The city government of Taegu claims that the complex will revive the rapidly declining industrial activities in and around the city. However, constructing an industrial complex near the river will have devastating implications in terms of the water quality of the Nakdong River, the water quality of which has already been severely degraded. This plan met enormous opposition not only from the residents of Pusan and of the Kyungnam Province but also from local governments.

It quickly became a political issue. The opposition argues that the Kim Young Sam government is begging for votes for the 1997 presidential election from Taegu and the Province of Kyungbuk, which will benefit from the complex. Residents of Taegu and the Kyungbuk Province believed that the new complex will revive their regional economy and argue that it should not be cancelled. The Seoul government said that strict environmental regulations, even after the development of the complex, will prevent the further degradation of the Nakdong River. The opposition flatly rejects such an idea. Newspapers in Pusan carried editorials and followed

the issue on the front page on an almost daily basis. The opposition was all-out. As the issue became politicized, cleavages began to emerge between the residents of the two regions. As of the end of 1996, the issue remained unresolved.

In 1995, the KFEM made "air" the focus of its activities. This time, to deal with the issue more systematically and popularly, the KFEM created a sub-unit, called the "Green Life Movement" (GLM), which was intended to focus upon air pollution and clean air. One of the major daily newspapers, *Hankook Ilbo*, housed the GLM and sponsored its activities. An outstanding achievement of the GLM was the production of a national map of air pollution. A team of scientists, activists, local green movement groups, and other pro-environmental civic associations conducted a nation-wide survey (measuring about 12,000 locations) of the levels of NO₂ in the air, from which a sophisticated air pollution map was produced (GLM, 1995).

The destruction of nature due to the construction of golf courses has also been a focal point attracting a good deal of energy from the KFEM in the 1990s. Toward the end of Roh Tae Woo's presidency, permission to construct a large number of golf courses was issued to the extent that the Sixth Republic was often referred to as the "golf Republic". Mountainous areas, in particular the Province of Kyonggi which is physically annexed to Seoul, were the preferred sites for new golf courses. Golf course development is "a very lucrative business" (Han, 1994: 231) involving speculation and windfall profits. Almost every single golf course construction site met strong opposition from the local residents. The central KFEM or its local chapters were involved in supporting the opposition.¹³ Golf courses present nearby residents with no benefits but loss such as land price increase. The construction process alone is an enormous nuisance with noise, traffic, dust, and lost soil. Golf courses also offer almost no job opportunities to the local residents. Instead, they bring about a whole range of environmental problems, i.e., the destruction of surrounding habitats, potential surface soil inflow to their agricultural fields (landslides and crop damages), pesticide pollution, and a sense of relative deprivation.

When the civilian President (Kim Young Sam) was sworn into office in February 1993, the general public and the environmental movement had high hopes for a much better environment. President Kim even declared himself an "environmental President" in 1996. But his government's policy and performance unfolded in the opposite direction. It loosened the tightly controlled "Green Belt" regulations by formulating a deregulatory policy. The implications of this policy posture are enormous in terms of development versus preservation. It implies development over preservation and severe damage to the ecosystem. The would-be profit makers responded as if this was what they had been waiting for. They took actions to loosen up the constraining "Natural Park Law" and demanded the legislation of environmental deregulation. A series of development-oriented legislatures ensued. For instance, bills that allow the development of hot springs and underground drinking water were passed. Environmental

movement organizations, including the KFEM, took counter actions. They submitted a petition opposing such legislation, implementation of which was consequently put on hold. But once the government's position has been set, it is very difficult to reverse regardless of how strong the opposition may be. Like other semiperipheral state, the Kim Young Sam government is under the "pressure to maintain global industrial competitiveness, with local and multinational business interests pushing the state to minimize costs, including relaxing environmental vigilance" (Smith, 1994: 21).

In 1995, local elections were held to elect the heads of local governments. This was very significant in the history of Korean political development because since 1961 they had been appointed by the President. Relevant to our subject is the direct and aggressive participation of the KFEM in the elections. It solicited and supported "environmental candidates" to run for multi-layered positions. There were 46 such candidates, out of which 32 won. Among those, two won mayoral positions (interview with Chi Beom Lee, the Deputy Secretary-General, Nov. 20, 1995). This was a major victory. For the victors will be, to say the least, pro-environmental in their capacities. Perhaps it would be more meaningful to put "the environment" on the political platform and publicise it through campaigns.

3) *Strategies and Impacts of the KFEM*

The KFEM does not appear to have identifiable or distinctive long-term strategies. It has tended to employ and adopt all kinds of activities: demonstrations, protest rallies, sit-ins, public hearings, seminars, conferences, lectures, cultural events (performances), fund raising events, education and training, and the acquisition of space. These do not constitute a clear set of strategies. They are the activities, means, or perhaps the methods of movements. The activists use these methods differently depending upon the nature of the issues they are fighting for or against. The methods or activities of other organizations are not very different from those adopted by the KFEM, although the KFEM tends to be less moderate than others.

As far as the impact of Korea's environmental movements is concerned, we should broaden our scope and not limit ourselves to the KFEM alone. However, unfortunately the general impact of Korea's environmental movements is difficult to assess. Nevertheless, it is clear that in spite of their short history the impact has been wide reaching. Many environmental NGOs have come into being. They have become very active and well organized, and the membership of some of the representative organizations has steadily increased. The composition of their membership is also broad ranging. Perhaps as a result of that, the public's awareness has risen. The mass media has tended to be sympathetic towards environmental NGOs. They have covered the activities of the NGOs and have waged a wide range of environmental campaigns themselves. Obviously, this too has had a positive impact in promoting public awareness.

Political leaders have shown serious interest in environmental issues. Some have selected environmentalists as their policy advisors or full-time aides and some even run research centers. Others have sponsored conferences on environmental issues, and there are a few politicians who maintain close personal ties with environmental activists. They are generally patrons of environmental organizations. During the elections, the environment becomes a popular issue with almost every candidate. Everyone is pro-environment. This may point to the alleviation of public consciousness about the environment. How politicians actually stand once they were elected to office is quite another issue, but in order to attract votes, candidates must address environmental issues.

The government has tended to listen to the demands of environmental organizations, although the sincerity of its attitude has always been in question. After the 1992 Rio Conference, the government appeared to change its environmental policy on the grounds that unless the entire economy turns into a pro-environmental system, it will be difficult to compete in the world market. The development of green technology by the business sector has been emphasized by the government. Otherwise, according to the government, Korean products will lose out on the world market which is responsive to developments in green technology. In 1994, the government upgraded the erstwhile Agency of Environment to the Ministry of Environment and expanded its size and budget. It is difficult to determine whether this upgrading was a result of environmental movements or an external stimulus such as the Rio Conference.

The business sector has generally showed signs of change in its attitude towards environmental movements. A good number of big business groups have declared their pro-environmental posture. Clean technology is now emphasized, and some firms have volunteered to sponsor environmental movements. Yet, the sincerity of the would-be pro-environmental business sector is questionable. No environmental organization is so naive as to place deep trust in what the business sector says and does. The profit motif is inherent and strong. Once monitoring is loosened, the business sector can change its attitude overnight.

Perhaps the most significant and real impact of Korea's environmental movements, particularly the KFEM, is on the word "environment" itself. This may mean the elevation of the public's awareness or the activation of environmental movements. In any case, "environment" is omnipresent in Korea today. Everyone speaks about the environment. Everyone is pro-environment. This is a positive trajectory in terms of environmental protection. However, some analysts and activists express concern for this very fact. They worry that the environment may become "commodified" in the sense that it will be used as an issue or matter of concern only when needed. Of course they worry that environmental movements may become "functionalized" in the sense that certain characteristics of the environment are invoked to mobilize support to achieve particular goals when they are deemed useful by certain social groups and organizations

(see Lee, 1995). Such groups may include business firms, political parties, newspaper companies, and civic associations.

All these are the positive impacts and achievements of Korea's environmental movements, although unfortunately the environment in general has not improved over past years. If environmental movements aspire to alleviate and ultimately eliminate pollution, then it must be said that Korea's environmental movements have had little impact. In spite of the "booming" environmental movements, the environment itself shows no notable signs of improvement. The quality of water and air in cities has not improved, the destruction of nature as a result of diverse development projects (e.g., golf course construction) continues, and the country's nuclear policy, in essence, remains intact. From this angle, Korea's environmental movements have recorded no successes.

It is difficult to find causes for this paradox--while Korea's environmental movements are booming, the environment has not improved. One explanation may be that people are now more conscious of environmental problems compared to the past. Because of this increased consciousness, more and more environmental issues are becoming objects of concern. In other words, issues that received little attention from environmentalists in the past are now very prominent. The paradox is a subjective phenomenon. Information about the environment is more open than before and access to information is easier. Mass media coverage of environmental problems has increased rapidly. Another explanation may be that the state and business have succeeded in containing environmental movements, by pretending to be pro-environment. The government allows environmental organizations to act, but only within the confines of the larger system. It responds to certain demands by environmental movements but only to the degree that they do not represent a major barrier to the smooth operation of the national economy. The business sector responds to certain demands, but only to the extent that they do not conflict with their fundamental interests. Such notions are only speculative and need to be verified through more systematic analyses.

7. Concluding Remarks

After 30 years of miraculous high-speed industrial growth, South Korea suffers from an extreme environmental crisis. In 1996 alone, major incidents related to pollution or environmental deterioration such as illegal releases of water from the contaminated Siwha Lake, incidents of pollution illness reported in the Yecheon petrochemical industrial complex, dead fish in major rivers, and summer-time ozone-related smog in Seoul, all took place to the surprise of the general public who believed that pollution in Korea is managed and controlled by the government. These clearly reveal the environmental crisis in Korea.

The environmental crisis gave birth to environmental movements in the 1980s. Prior to late 1980s, because of military authoritarian regimes, the environmental crisis was considered to be taboo. Raising questions about pollution was perceived as a challenge to the national goal, thereby an opposition to be suppressed. But as the liberalization of the political regime took place, the environmental problem together with many other issues became public. Movements whose main concerns and goals were the reversal of pollution and the protection of nature have emerged.

From the very beginning of the environmental movements in South Korea, two issues have been central: one was pollution (or degradation of the environment) and the other was the nuclear issue. High-speed industrialization has produced all kinds of pollution, e.g., air pollution, water pollution, noise, dust, the destruction of nature. From the late 1980s, when environmental movements began in South Korea, anti-pollution movements were generally at the center of the environmental movements. Air and water are two issues that have persisted on the part of the movements.

Anti-nuclear movements in South Korea have also been at the center of environmental movements. So long as the South Korean government maintains its nuclear energy policy position--continuing to operate multiple nuclear plants while constructing many more--, anti-nuclear movements, whose ultimate goal is the closure of the nuclear industry, will be a major current in environmental politics in South Korea. Given the fact that the Korean economy is structurally dependent upon nuclear power, the goal is likely to remain. This is the very reason that anti-nuclear movements in South Korea will be stronger than ever in the coming years. The tasks before South Korea's anti-nuclear movement are enormous. But their success relies on the participation of ordinary people. "A Nuclear-Free 21st Century" may be a dream, but a dream the movements must aspire to.

As I mentioned at the beginning, only in recent years have environmental movements in South Korea become the subject of serious research. Needless to say, a lot more research on the topic needs to be done. This paper is not a systematic or comprehensive analysis. It focused on one of the largest organizations. The activities of other major organizations still need to be documented and further case studies will enrich this line of research. There are many cases to be properly analyzed and the issues are too numerous to list: nuclear plant sites, prospective permanent nuclear waste disposal site(s), protection campaigns for drinking water reservoirs, campaigns against golf course construction, etc. A comparative study of different organizations and/or different cases would also be extremely beneficial.

For future research on the topic we need to identify some key research questions: Is the ideology (or philosophy) of environmental movements in South Korea anti-systemic, reformist, or green alternative? Is there any ideology at all? What are the main strategies adopted by organizations? Are those strategies more militant or more moderate compared to those of the

past? Are they state-oriented (e.g., policy change) or life world-oriented (e.g., change in life style of individuals) in terms of their impacts? What is the relationship between environmental movements and other social movements? What is the linkage between environmental movement organizations (in particular its leaders) and institutional politics? Do environmental movements function as grounds for activists to ultimately enter institutional politics? How local or global are the movements? Is the international solidarity to which everyone aspires making any substantive progress? What are the main barriers preventing such solidarity?

These are only some of questions which remain to be studied. Korean environmental movements are already very complex, to say the least. In addition, they tend to diversify very quickly raising many more questions. The formulation of research questions should be creative in order to capture the complexity and diversity of the subject.

If the "significance of environmental movements lies in their real and potential impacts on shaping or redefining the context, form, and structure of political and ideological discourses on development issues" (Lee, 1995, P.16), Korea's environmental movements have, so far, been successful. But Korea's environmental movements were unsuccessful in terms of producing actual results. Whatever significance we speak of, the future prospects for environmental movements in South Korea are bright. So long as the framework of the continuing debate and the policy priority of development versus the environment impinges upon us, Korea's environmental movements will be strong. When it comes to result-oriented significance, Korea's environmental movements still have a long way to go.

Environmental activists in Korea understand that the problems they are tackling are very complex and difficult to solve within a short time frame. They also understand that it may require generations to solve these problems or at least to achieve a more peaceful coexistence with the natural environment because the assault made by the Korean model of high-speed industrialization and its miraculous success has been so massive and devastating. Even worse, the Korean development model--high rates of export-oriented economic growth, dominance of a handful of big business conglomerates over the entire national economy, and the symbiosis between the business sector and the state--remains, in essence, unchanged.

In general, prospects for Korea's environmental movements are bright. Expansion of environmental movements will continue for quite a while because the opportunity structure is very favorable. Issues are still numerous and resources are abundant. I do not foresee a climactic point for Korea's environmental movements in the near future. For now, diversity and complexity will increase rapidly. Although this is an inevitable path for almost every social movement, it will be particularly evident in the case of environmental movements. At this stage, it is difficult to evaluate environmental movements which flourish and appear to carry out their objectives

actively. The real test for Korea's environmental movements, however, will come only after this nascent phase stabilizes.

Notes:

1. The discussion in this section relied upon (1) interviews with environmental activists, (2) pamphlets, leaflets, newsletters, and other materials published by various environmental organizations.
2. Hankook Ilbo started with a major coverage of the reports on January 18, 1985, which was followed by every major daily papers, including the conservative newspaper like Chosun Ilbo.
3. The first commercial nuclear power plant began operation in 1978, at a town called Kori, which is located in the southeastern coastal region not far from the city of Pusan.
4. Four plants are located at Kori; one at Wolsung (several miles to the north on the same southeast coast near the city of Kyongju, the capital of the Shilla Kingdom); two at Uljin (a county located on the southeast coast in the province of Kyungbuk, not far away from the city of Pohang, known for its huge steel processing plant); four at Youngkwang (a county located on the southwest coast of the peninsula).
5. According to an assessment conducted by the National Assembly in 1988, since the first nuclear plant went into operation in 1978, there have been 193 accidents that have halted operations in seven plants (Bello and Rosenfeld, 1990, pp.108-109).
6. Several foreign analysts have already paid attention to South Korea's nuclear dilemma from this angle. See Walden Bello and S. Rosenfeld, 1990, *Dragons in Distress*. San Francisco: Institute for Food and Development Policy; Martin Hart-Landsberg, 1993, *The Rush to Development*. New York: Monthly Review Press; and Norman Eder, 1996, *Poisoned Prosperity*. New York: M.E. Sharpe. These analysts all agree that South Korea "rushed to develop" its nuclear generation program in parallel to its rush to industrialize. Nuclear expert, Salomon Levy, who conducted a validity assessment in 1982 commissioned by the World Bank pointed out that perhaps because of this "rush," Korean nuclear plants are more prone to accidents (Bello and Rosenfeld, 1990, p.109).
7. Of course, in April 1992, Pyongyang shocked Seoul's new civilian government and the international community by announcing that North Korea would withdraw its membership from the IAEA which it formally joined in 1985. There was speculation for months prior to this announcement that North Korea was developing a nuclear weapon program by building spent fuel reprocessing facilities in Youngbyon area. A "nuclear crisis" on the Korean peninsula has ensued for some time thereafter.
8. There have been several reported incidents of dumping of other radioactive wastes such as rubber gloves and vinyl shoe covers. There have also been reported cases of leukemia near nuclear plants (Bello and Rosenfeld, 1990, p. 108). As a result of these reports, public fears have risen, perhaps coupled with the Chernobyl disaster in 1986.
9. Most major daily newspapers participated in environmental campaigns either as the organizer or more often as sponsor for some type of environmental movement organizations. I wish to introduce one case to give an idea of the active involvement of mass media in promoting environmental movements. Dongah Ilbo, one of the more prestigious daily newspapers in Seoul sponsored the "Green Scout" movement, which was started by a small group of university professors in an organization called, the "Movement to Recover Clean Water"--founded in 1991. The "Green Scout" kicked off in December 1994 with the addition of a few national assembly members, some journalists, and business representatives in the founding membership. Dongah Ilbo as a sponsoring institution waged an energetic campaign in soliciting participation from schools (it was a youth movement as well) or other social organizations like banks and firms. Almost every day it carried reports on who joined the "Green Scout" together with pictures. According to a PC database source, as of April 14, 1995, the "Green Scout" enjoyed 17,435 individual

members, 5 kindergartens, 78 elementary schools, 66 secondary schools, 11 universities, and 656 general organizations as its members. Altogether there were more than four million people in number. This does not mean there were four million active green scouts in Korea. But the schools and organizations that participated were committed to imbuing the green spirit to its constituents (see Cho, 1995, pp. 294-296).

10. Under Park Chung Hee's authoritarian regime, he was involved in the famous 1975 "Myongdong Cathedral incident" and arrested under the charge of the violation of the Emergency Decree No. 9--Park Chung Hee's notorious super-constitutional weapon to repress political dissidents. He was later sentenced to prison for six years. In prison, he developed a serious interest in environmental problems, a rather rare choice among student activists then. He said the decision was attributable to his major, i.e., agricultural chemistry.
11. One analyst uses the term "minjung discourse" to represent this. *Minjung* was and still is a popular sociological concept, which was initially coined in the 1970s by the famous sociologist, Wan Sang Han. Professor Han used the term to represent "the ruled who were totally alienated" (see Ku, 1994, p. 126).
12. The famous "Anmyundo incident" (some call it "uprising") took place in November, 1990. The incident began when a newspaper reported Anmyundo--a small island located at the tip of the Taean peninsula on the mid-western coast--as a designated site for nuclear waste disposal. Residents rose up, opposing the government's plan.
13. The most recent anti-golf course construction campaign was the opposition movement against an ongoing golf course project on Kaya Mountain (a National Park), which is well-known as the site of the *Haeinsa* Temple located in the southwest by the city of Taegu. In this case, local residents happened to be influential and powerful Buddhist monks at the Temple, and it gained wide publicity. In addition to this particular site, there are several construction sites which have undergone similar campaigns.

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APPENDIX

Korea' Environmental Organizations Discussed in the Chapter

Abbreviation	Full Name	Founding Year
SGP	Study Group of Pollution	
KPRI	Korea Pollution Research Institute	1982
KAPMC	Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Council	1984
KAPCMC	Korea Anti-Pollution Civilian Movement Council	1986
KAPMYC	Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Youth Council	1987
KAPMA	Korea Anti-Pollution Movement Association	1988
KEPSA	Korea Environment and Pollution Studies Association	1989
KFEM	Korea Federation for Environmental Movement	1993
	Green Korea	1993
	Green Scout	1994
GLM	Green Life Movement	1995

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